

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

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FM USLO PEKING

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1924

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 2778

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PBOR, SREF, CH, VM, CB

SUBJ: LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN PRC-VIETNAM RELATIONS

REF: PEKING 2717

1. SUMMARY. CHINESE NEGOTIATOR CHUNG HSI-TUNG'S SUDDEN RETURN TO HANOI CREATES A SLIGHT POSSIBILITY THAT THE CURRENT DEADLOCK IN THE SINO-VIETNAMESE TALKS WILL BE BROKEN. ALL OTHER SIGNS, HOWEVER, INDICATE THAT RELATIONS CONTINUE TO WORSEN. CHINESE PROPAGANDA HAS MENTIONED A NEW SERIES OF BORDER INCIDENTS, WHILE THE VIETNAMESE AMBASSADOR HAS REPORTEDLY WARNED OF A CONCENTRATION OF PRC TROOPS ON THE FRONTIER. END SUMMARY.

2. PRC VICE FOREIGN MINISTER CHUNG HSI-TUNG'S SEPTEMBER
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4 RETURN TO THE HANOI TALKS IS AN INDICATION THAT PEKING DOES NOT WANT A COMPLETE DEADLOCK IN ITS NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SRV OVER THE FATE OF THE ETHNIC CHINESE. ALTHOUGH WE DO NOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT CHUNG MAY HAVE BROUGHT A NEW SET OF PROPOSALS, THERE IS NO OTHER EVIDENCE SO FAR OF ANY LESSENING IN SINO-VIETNAMESE HOSTILITY.

3. ON THE CONTRARY, THERE IS AMPLE EVIDENCE OF A WORSENING OF RELATIONS. IN HIS SEPTEMBER 3 BANQUET TOAST FOR VISITING KAMPUCHEAN LEADER NUON CHEA, FOR INSTANCE, POLITBURO MEMBER ULANFU NOTED APPROVINGLY THAT "SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THIS YEAR THE KAMPUCHEAN ARMYMEN AND PEOPLE HAVE BEATEN BACK THE ARMED INVASIONS BY VIETNAM", AND STATED POINTEDLY THAT "WE WILL SIDE WITH YOU." PREVIOUSLY PRC LEADERS HAD AVOIDED PUBLICLY CHARGING VIETNAM WITH AGGRESSION AGAINST ITS NEIGHBOR, AND EVEN VICE PREMIER CHEN HSI-LIEN IN HOSTING KAMPUCHEAN DEFENSE MINISTER SON SEN LAST JULY DID NOT MENTION VIETNAM BY NAME.

4. THE VIETNAMESE AMBASSADOR'S SEPTEMBER 2 NATIONAL DAY RECEPTION WAS THE COLDEST IN MEMORY. THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT WAS REPRESENTED ONLY BY VICE FOREIGN MINISTER CHANG HAI-FENG, IN CONTRAST TO POLITBURO-LEVEL REPRESENTATION IN PREVIOUS YEARS. IN A STRIKING DEPARTURE FROM NORMAL PROTOCOL, CHANG REPORTEDLY BROKE AWAY FROM HIS VIETNAMESE HOSTS MIDWAY THROUGH THE RECEPTION AND OSTENTATIOUSLY STRODE ACROSS THE ROOM TO CHAT WITH THE ROMANIAN AND YUGOSLAV AMBASSADORS. THE PLA WAS REPRESENTED ONLY BY A DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE LOGISTICS DEPARTMENT, AND THERE WAS NO ATTENDANCE BY A MEMBER OF THE CCP'S INTERNATIONAL LIAISON DEPARTMENT, A SURE SIGN THAT PARTY-TO-PARTY RELATIONS ARE NOW CONSIDERED BROKEN.

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5. WHILE PRC PROPAGANDA HAS NOT HARPED ON THE ALLEGED VIETNAMESE OCCUPATION OF CHINESE TERRITORY IN THE WEEK FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL STORY OF AUGUST 27 (REFTEL), THE BORDER PROBLEM WAS RAISED AGAIN IN A SEPTEMBER 4 NCNA ARTICLE. THE NCNA CORRESPONDENT CHARGED THAT SINCE AUGUST 25 VIETNAM HAS "TIME AND AGAIN" SENT ARMED TROOPS ACROSS THE BORDER TO TRY TO ABDUCT CHINESE INHABITANTS. IN ONE SUCH INCIDENT ON AUGUST 28, A CHINESE YOUTH WAS SERIOUSLY WOUNDED. TWO DAYS LATER, ACCORDING TO THE DISPATCH, OVER 100 VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS AND POLICE CROSSED INTO CHINESE TERRITORY AND SET UP MACHINE GUNS THERE.

6. MEANWHILE, VIETNAMESE AMBASSADOR VINH HAS TOLD THE INDIANS, AND PROBABLY OTHERS, THAT THE PRC WAS MASSING TROOPS ALONG THE BORDER AND PLANNING AN INVASION. THE CHINESE, FOR THEIR PART, INCLUDING MFA AMERICAN AND OCEANIAN AFFAIRS ACTING DIRECTOR CHU CHI-CHEN IN A CONVERSATION SEPTEMBER 4 WITH A USLO OFFICER, ARE TAKING A GLOOMY POSITION ON THE PROSPECTS FOR SETTLEMENT AND TEND TO BLAME VIETNAMESE ACTIONS ON THE SOVIET UNION. WHILE WE WOULD NOT GO THAT FAR, IT DOES LOOK FROM HERE AS IF MOSCOW HAS MORE TO GAIN THAN HANOI FROM THE CONTINUAL HIGH LEVEL OF TENSION ON THE SINO-VIETNAMESE

BORDER. WOODCOCK

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